



# STAR Autism Support

## Working Together: A Series for Caregivers

**This series provides information and training on topics of interest to caregivers of individuals with autism or other developmental disabilities. These workshops discuss effective evidence-based strategies for caregivers to support their child at home or in the community. Skills addressed include communication, behavior, self-help, self-management, and safety awareness. Presentations include lecture, demonstration, video examples, discussion, and practical ideas to support teens and adults with a variety of support needs.**

### **Session 1 – Identifying Strategies That Work**

How does autism impact learning and behavior? This session presents the importance of using evidence-based practices to support the learning needs of teens and adults with autism and other related disabilities. Caregivers will learn which strategies have been proven to be effective and how they can collaborate with educators to support their child at home and at school.

### **Session 2 – Behavior: Increasing Desired Behaviors at Home and in Your Community**

To address behaviors perceived as challenging, it's important for caregivers to understand and effectively use behavioral principles to help children understand expectations and increase desired behaviors. This session identifies commonly-used behavioral terms and provides a variety of tips and suggestions families can use for building positive behaviors at home and in the community.

### **Session 3 – Visualize It: Using Environmental Supports Effectively**

This session outlines how to design structured, organized, and predictable environments that support independence and success. Learn how to use visual schedules, visual supports, and effective environmental arrangements to teach teens and adults with autism important skills and routines.

### **Session 4 – Understanding: Caregiver Supports for Increasing Receptive Language**

In this session, caregivers will learn how to help those they support with autism to understand language. By adding supports during routines and pre-teaching concepts related to routines, caregivers can increase receptive language skills, which are important for understanding and responding to requests as well as expressive communication skills.

### **Session 5 – Communication: Caregiver Supports for Teaching Expressive Language**

We express our wants and needs through various modes of communication, and there are many ways caregivers can increase language opportunities at home and in the community. In this session, caregivers learn how to create opportunities throughout the day to practice verbal and nonverbal communication skills, as well as how to respond to communication attempts in ways that increase motivation.

### **Session 6 – Puberty and Adolescence: Preparing Yourself and Your Child**

Puberty brings new challenges that can be difficult to explain and teach to children with autism. It is important for caregivers to partner with educational staff to start discussions about body changes early and identify new routines to teach like shaving, using a menstrual pad, and wearing deodorant. In addition, teams should use visual tools and specific teaching strategies to teach the difference between public and private behaviors related to puberty. Free resources and tools will be shared so that educational teams and families can work together to navigate these new situations.

## **Session 7 – Safety Skills: Increasing Awareness at Home and in the Community**

As teens and adults with autism learn to navigate social situations more independently, they are required to use problem-solving skills and increase safety awareness. It is important to specifically teach teens and adults about healthy relationships when meeting others on the internet or in person. New situations can be confusing and those who have a history of elopement may need increased support for safety. Free resources and tools will be shared so that educational teams and families can work together to navigate these new situations.

## **Session 8 – I Can Do It Myself! Personal Hygiene and Activities of Daily Living**

Self-help skills like grooming and personal hygiene are crucial for independent living and social acceptance for teens and adults with autism. In this session, caregivers learn how autism and developmental disabilities impact activities of daily living and strategies for building skills like showering, completing daily chores, preparing meals, and navigating transportation. Through routines and motivation, caregivers and educational staff can support independence in these skills at home and in the community.

## **Session 9 – Making the Most Out of Mealtime**

Mealtime challenges are common for people with autism and other developmental disabilities. This session outlines the importance of having a consistent mealtime routine and strategies for making mealtimes a positive experience for everyone involved. Caregivers will identify common mealtime challenges and learn practical strategies to address selective eating, overeating, and undereating.

## **Session 10 – Thriving in a Social World**

Teens or adults with autism and other developmental disabilities benefit from learning and practicing specific skills in order to thrive in a social world. This training highlights important social and emotional learning (SEL) skills such as controlling impulses, identifying and interpreting emotions, and self-monitoring behaviors during daily routines. In this session, caregivers will learn how to work with educational teams to identify skills to practice at home and in the community.